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OMI's Osprey alliance forces Heidmar out

The new alliance between OMI Corp and Osprey has killed off a key partnership between OMI and Heidenreich Marine (Heidmar) and led Per Heidenreich to quit OMI's board of directors. It had become increasingly clear in recent weeks that the three companies were struggling to reach an understanding on shared participation in an Asian product tanker pool. The companies jointly declared this week that Heidmar had been unable to agree with the new International Product Carriers (IPC) pool formed by the other two. Heidmar and IPC will now potentially be competitors in that market.

OMI will withdraw its three tankers from the OMI-Heidmar pool at its earliest opportunity , leaving Heidmar with its four chartered-in tankers in the Singapore market under the name Heidenreich Marine (Far East) Inc. In addition, Heidenreich chose to resign as an OMI director, citing potential for conflict of interest. Heidenreich and Stevenson are friends, neighbours in the Connecticut town of Greenwich and sometime golf partners. "Per has served OMI ably and loyally as a director and we would have liked for him to remain on the board," Stevenson said. "However, we understand and respect his discomfort with the situation."

Heidenreich was out of the country this week and not available for comment. OMI will continue to deploy three Panamax tankers in Heidenreich's Star Tankers Inc pool in the Atlantic. "We are confident that Star Tankers will continue to market our three Panamax tankers effectively," Stevenson said. Both Heidenreich and Stevenson had said they were optimistic about reaching an understanding for continued cooperation in the Singapore market but outsiders were sceptical from the outset. As one remarked, "Three is not a very good number in a relationship." One broker notes that Osprey already maintains a Singapore office and has a longstanding commitment to that market place. Like OMI, it operates 29,000-dwt products tankers but also has vessels in the 40,000-dwt to 45,000-dwt range.

Heidmar will need to decide whether to press ahead in a tough Asian market if it cannot attract another owner as a pool partner. "As a time-charter owner, it's a lot more difficult to stand alone out there," he said.